L'ART DE PATISSERIE ET LE PALAIS DE VERSAILLES: A STUDY OF POWER THROUGH PASTRY

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ABSTRACT

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Louis XIV's manipulation of the aristocracy at the Court of Versailles in his pursuit of absolute power is well documented. The utter opulence of the period was communicated in every realm of life at Court. The grand dining rituals of the Sun King in particular epitomize the relationship between expression of power and consumption of fine food.

Contemporaneous with the relocation of the French monarchy to Versailles was the development of pastry-making into the modern art form recognized today. Changes in culinary techniques combined with sociological factors including increased access to cookbooks and the introduction of restaurants contributed to the elevation of the gastronomic field to its current standing in French culture. How was pastry, the novel art of the day, utilized in pursuit of the goals of Louis XIV? The expression gluttony and excess of Versailles-era France required pastry, and the art evolved to reflect the exorbitant wealth and regal frivolity of the time period.

This inquiry examines primary and secondary texts to explore relationships between the culture of Versailles-era France and the pastry of the same time. Connections between the evolution of the art of *pâtisserie* and the spectacular, regal-centric culture of Versailles as orchestrated by the Sun King shape the role played by the former in the creation of the latter. Biographical sources about Louis XIV and about Versailles itself provide the cultural and political aspects of the time, while period cookbooks illustrate the culinary advancements made during the same era. This thesis attempts to unite these two strains of research to prove that the development and advancement of pastry played a role in Louis XIV's distraction and manipulation of his aristocracy at Versailles.

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Introduction

L'Art de Pâtisserie et le Palais de Versailles: A Study of Power Through Pastry

What comes to mind when one imagines the Palace of Versailles? Gold leaf, court intrigue, an historically self-centric king, and… pastry? Fans of Sophia Copolla's *Marie Antoinette* will have no issue bridging that gap, as that film gave more-than-adequate attention to confectionary delights. This work takes a further step back to when such indulgences were just taking shape and gaining popularity, to the time of the Sun King's founding of his new domain, with the goal of exploring the role played by pastry, *l'art de pâtisserie*, in Louis XIV's complete manipulation of his aristocracy at Versailles.

Beginning with an historical analysis of the factors contributing to Louis XIV's relocation of the royal residence (and, by extension, the entire Court) to Versailles, this project then explores the consequences of said relocation of France's ruling class of the time. The next chapter focuses on pastry throughout history, chronicling the development of the art as well as other technological and social factors at play and their resulting influence on the French gastronomical sphere during the era of Louis XIV's Versailles. An exploration of food at the Court of Versailles, and specifically at the grand *fêtes* given by Louis XIV, illustrates the complicated and enduring relationship between consumption of fine foods and assertions of wealth, power, and status. The following chapter focuses on pastry specifically as a vehicle for communicating this power, as well as a novel form of food that elevated Versailles beyond the gastronomic level of the world outside, motivated by the burgeoning restaurant scene in Paris.

Finally, an experiential chapter contributes learnings from hands-on experience rather than research, lending a narrative tone to the conclusion of this project.

This project focuses on *l'art de pâtisserie*, a specific area of the French culinary realm dealing with sweets and confections as well as pastries. This is distinct from the practice of *boulangerie*, the baking of breads. An exploration of the significance of bread in French culture constitutes another project entirely; though it may seem arbitrary to those who would lump all these things together as simply 'baking', be assured this distinction is solidly grounded and piously observed in French food culture. As such, this project does not explore the *boulangerie* of Louis XIV's Versailles, but focuses solely on the role of pastry in the food culture of the time.

The Sun King's absolutist consolidation of power, achieved by distracting the nobility with court etiquette, gossip and intrigue, lavish parties and extramarital scandal has been explored in depth, and as such is treated as the base from which this thesis diverges to make its assertions. This project culminates with the argument that the specific state of the gastronomic and political realms of his time allowed Louis XIV to employ the burgeoning art of pastry as one of his many distractionary techniques aimed at his nobility to conceal his true motives has he continued to position himself as the epicenter of power in seventeenth century France.

In this inquiry, primary and secondary texts are examined to explore relationships between the culture of Versailles-era France and the pastry of the same time, as well as the persona of Louis XIV and his politics. From these explorations come connections between the evolution of the art of pastry and the spectacular, regal-centric culture of Versailles as orchestrated by the Sun King. Using biographical sources about Louis XIV and about Versailles itself will provide the cultural and political context of the time, while exploring period

cookbooks, as well as the evolution within cookbooks over time, showcases the culinary advancements made and their contributing influences on the French food culture of the seventeenth century. Interpreting texts focused on the culture of the time period, viewed through the lens of food, draws out connections between historical happenings and culinary trends. Uniting these two strains of research asserts that the development and advancement of patisserie did indeed play a role in the political culture of the day at Versailles.

A second branch of methodology is the formation of new observations gleaned during an immersive trip to Paris providing a modern viewpoint of the relationship between pastry, food culture, and power in France. This trip provided multiple avenues for carrying theoretical research over into experiential learning. First, a course in pastry-making focused on classic techniques offered an understanding of how the French think about and interact with *l'art de pâtisserie*, and about the role these traditional recipes play in French food history and culture. Additionally, first-hand observations of the Palace of Versailles help to situate the research within the cultural context of seventeenth-century France by providing the backdrop against which the luxuries and oddities of court life took place. Together, these provide the material for a final experiential chapter, where the assertions made come from personal experience.

Chapter I

Louis XIII, XIV, and the Creation of Versailles

"To begin the birth of Versailles with the birth of Louis XIII, September 27, 1601, is not as arbitrary as it might seem. His fishbowl life as infant, prince and king opens the modern mind to what life will be like in the palace of Louis XIV"[1]. A brief biography of Louis XIII reveals him to be a strangely introverted king, raised by his mother Marie de Médicis "to render him incapable of ever acting like a King," in the words of Tallemant[2]. For our purposes we are concerned mainly with the events of this weak, odd King that contributed to his construction of and fondness for his hunting lodge away from the central hubbub of Paris, in a marshy swamp twenty kilometers outside the city, in a small town called Versailles. The weak-willed personality of Louis XIII is crucial here, as both the permissiveness of his youth and the pivotal point of his assertion of power were factors in the construction of Versailles. Since the assassination of King Henry IV, Concino Concini and his wife Leonara Galigaï, two Italian consorts of the Queen Mother, "had been usurping power… emptying the French Treasury… and patronizing the furious but thus far impotent Louis"[3]. The end of this manipulation came on the Day of Dupes, in which Louis XIII transferred his favor from his mother, who would be banished and die in exile, to the infamous Cardinal Richelieu; of this, "the doubling of the domain of Versailles was a direct result"[4].

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[1] Barry, Joseph Amber. *Passions and Politics: A Biography of Versailles*, 3.

[2] Barry 11

[3] Barry 11

[4] Barry 13

On these lands, "modestly Louis planned a small château, no larger than a hunting lodge"[5]. In keeping with his guarded personality and resulting from his suspicion of his ministers, "he budgeted it under *Menus Plaisirs* (we might say, Light Entertainment), rather than *Bâtiments* (Buildings)"[6]. Versailles at its conception was to be a remote refuge for the King, befitted with only those elements of grandeur befitting a royal hunting party, rather than the elaborate trappings of an official royal residence. Alas, any ideas of moderation or quaintness died with Louis XIII.

Louis XIV was, from his birth, a King among kings, "described as 'born with an air of majesty so imposing to everyone that one could not touch him without being gripped by fear and respect'"[7]. Even as a child "aged six, Louis insist[ed] on respect and obedience from his brother, the Duc d'Anjou, aged three. He knows he is King and wants to be treated as such"[8]. Further proof of the young monarch's eagerness for the treatment due to him as King can be seen in his first preserved writings: six copies reading 'Homage is due to kings. They act as they please'[9]. The young Louis experienced an enormous shocking reversal in this treatment during the upheavals of *La Fronde*, a years-long conflict between the aristocracy and the King in which "the nobility responded… with rebellion against the monarchy"[10]. La Fronde "was Louis' first

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[5] Barry 12

[6] Barry 12

[7] Bonafoux, Pascal, and Gilles Target. *Behind the Scenes in Versailles*, 24.

[8] Barry 21

[9] Barry 22

[10] Teague, S. R. *Wretched Excess?: Conspicuous Consumption Amongst the Aristocracy in 18th Century France*, 66.

(and last) civil war, and it was to create, or rather recreate, Versailles"[11]. During these unnerving times, "for more than four impressionable years, from the age of ten to fourteen, Louis had felt the impact of the worst of wars— civil war"[12]. Driven from his home at the Louvre "while the gates of Paris opened to succor [Louis de Bourbon, the Prince of Condé and the most famous representative of his branch of the family] and his men, the King and his Court had to seek shelter for the night at Saint-Denis— and again the idea of Versailles, a royal residence securely distant from riotous Parisians, was seeded"[13]. This was "the time of Louis' 'impoverishment', when the Queen had to pawn the crown jewels"[14] while "nothing lacked in the great houses of the financiers"[15].

"'Govern us!' After the frightful years of the Fronde, the princely pillaging of the provinces, the cry was once again heard from the people"[16]. He returned to the Louvre, the historical royal residence, "but Paris, for Louis XIV, [was] never to be forgiven"[17]. The events of La Fronde resulted in "his very early conception of absolute monarchy"[18]. Louis was "unassuaged by the return to a Paris so fickle it now fought for the privilege of touching his

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[11] Barry 26

[12] Barry 31

[13] Barry 31

[14] Barry 32

[15] Barry 75

[16] Barry 33

[17] Barry 31

[18] Barry 143

garments" while "the insolence and revolt of the nobles"[19] left him with a lasting mistrust of his aristocracy that, in the future, would manifest in surprising, manipulative, and covert ways at the court of Versailles.

"Louis XIV was an actor in an epic drama, and as a King, divine right case his roles (as warrior, as saint, as supreme authority) and the spotlight that shone on him"[20]. Louis played his role well, "devoting himself eight hours a day to the pursuit of glory"[21]. After *La Fronde*, "the King's ability to negotiate with the aristocracy remained limited. If he dealt with them too harshly, open revolt could erupt, but he could neither bribe them (without risking France's finances further) nor raise their rank any higher than what they already had"[22]. When renovations to the Louvre were proposed, Louis instead jumped at the opportunity to solve this problem by turning his attention to his father's isolated hunting lodge at Versailles[23]. Louis had many motivations in relocating himself, and by extension, his court, to Versailles: "moving the court to a more secluded location, by 1680, allowed for the development of codes of conduct and etiquette that were both elaborate and calculated. It created 'marks of distinction' based upon proximity to Louis XIV himself that 'cost him nothing except courtesy, which came to him naturally'"[24]. At this point in history, Versailles was nothing more than a humble royal country house; reflecting from the future, one knows "the royal palace for a monarchical utopia was still

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[19] Barry 31

[20] Teague 31-2

[21] Barry 78

[22] Teague 34-5

[23] Teague 35

[24] Teague 35

to be constructed, French dukes to be reduced to domestics, the effrontery of the Fronde not simply to be forgotten, but potential *frondeurs* to be contained in a golden cage. Eventually Versailles was to be the physical embodiment of France predominant"[25].

As such, "by the will of the King, Versailles had to be the most sumptuous of all palaces, of any other châteaux ever built"[26]. The grandness of the château and its grounds is not simply the result of Louis's extravagant taste; a motivation that "the palace and its dependencies must be the theatre where everyone is made fully aware that there is not, and there never can be, any other power than that of the King" required Baroque grandeur unlike anything ever seen. To achieve this goal, "the architecture and the festivities… the splendor of the decorations… the masterly display of the fountains in the gardens… contributes to the message"[27]. Versailles was born of manipulative strategy on the part of Louis XIV, and was "above all a stage set, and so, superbly playing King, Louis would employ it"[28]. To all who entered there, there would be "no doubt that Versailles is a symbol of the power of the Bourbons"[29].

A second motivation behind the exquisite splendor of Louis XIV's *Palais de Versailles* was the competitive threat embodied by a nobleman called Fouquet and his own elaborately constructed château at Vaux-le-Vicomte. Upon the completion of this ornate castle, Fouquet "celebrated by inviting the King and the Court to a *fête*... There have been few such *fêtes* in

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[25] Barry 75

[26] Bonafoux 84

[27] Bonafoux 51

[28] Barry 67

[29] Bonafoux 38

French history— and the Sun King's were to be inspired by it"[30]. With its "decoration, furnishing, and adornment of such unprecedented unity and ease that *le style Louis XIV* might be said to have been created at Vaux before Louis XIV himself had found his own style;"[31] from the historical perspective, "Fouquet's new château and park… were no less… than Versailles itself anticipated"[32]. Louis' enmity with Fouquet was born of more than just the competition of two châteaux— Fouquet was Louis' minister of finance, and so his exorbitant wealth demonstrated a kind of power Louis would rather see reserved for royalty. To the King, "only by putting down Fouquet and becoming master of his own treasury and kingdom" could he be satisfied, "the Sun King have arisen— and Versailles been created"[33].

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[30] Barry 58

[31] Barry 59

[32] Barry 58

[33] Barry 63

The château Vaux-le-Vicomte[34]

The relocation of Louis XIV's Court to Versailles was motivated by his desire to achieve full manipulation over his nobles. This lofty goal had many avenues to its fulfillment, including: extravagant displays of wealth, both from the King and his Courtiers; the refinement of Court etiquette to center around proximity to the King; expansion of the noble class; and isolation from the rest of Europe.

Extravagance and excess are, to the contemporary mind, synonymous with Versailles. Such opulent displays of royal wealth began with a "seven-day fête, entitled *Les Plaisirs de l'isle*

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[34] "Visit Paris Region"

enchantée, announc[ing] the Sun King and the beginning of his century"[35]. A menagerie of exotic animals, decorations created by the most talented artisans, plays put on that were in tone both shocking and reverent enough to fit the scene; Louis had spared no expense, the reasons why became apparent later in his writings meant for the Grand Dauphin: "This society of pleasures… touches them and charms them more than we can say. The people… are pleased by the spectacle… By that we have hold of their spirit and their heart"[36]. Louis XIV used gaudy displays and entertainments to project the wealth, power, and control he worked so tirelessly to possess. Because in his absolutist domain, the King and the State were one and the same, the assertions made on the part of Louis XIV extended to the perception of France as a whole. Through this projection, the Sun King succeeded in drawing his mistrusted aristocracy ever closer into orbit, lured by the exquisite trappings of the King's luxuries. Again in his letters for the Dauphin, Louis explains his motivation:

> "what is consumed in this spending which could appear superfluous has for effect upon them a very advantageous impression of magnificence, of power, of richness and grandeur; this without counting also that by partaking in all the corporal exercises that can only be enjoyed and maintained by all this, always places the prince in good favor and makes for advantageous judgement of what one doesn't see, by what one does see"[37]

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[35] Barry 79

[36] Bonafoux 28

[37] Bonafoux 28

Though the fête "had been unforgettable, the entertainment a triumph, … the château was dismally inadequate"[38]. Even unfinished, Versailles still shone with its characteristic opulence, enchanting all who visited *Les Plaisirs de l'isle enchantée*, and the standard was set for the Sun King's definition of a party, as well as the nobility's expectations of life at Versailles.

Louis XIV was not the only person at Versailles making efforts to display his wealth. For the courtier, it became clear that "'Versailles' was to mean not so much the palace, the park, and the Trianons, but the courtly excesses and extravagances, the hidden world of the masters, the heavy purses of their mistresses"[39]. The projection of wealth among the nobility became almost as important as that of the King to them; and by encouraging this competition, Louis XIV succeeded in further distracting the aristocracy while he continued to centralize the government. According to Joseph Barry, "one might describe seventeenth-century France as a social pyramid of cascading wealth, privileges, and scorn"[40]. As a result, "privilege … became ingrained as the paramount of society; the mandates and rules surrounding it appeared to those living with its consequences to fashion how the country operated"[41]. The possession and display of privilege was more important at the Court of Versailles than anything, and more obvious than ever before. This privilege came along with being born into the nobility; "the aristocracy linked their conspicuous consumption and ostentation to their rights and privileges, and their dominance over society hinged upon that display"[42]. It also differentiated the ruling class, because "as much as

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[38] Barry 80

[39] Barry 113

[40] Barry 44

[41] Teague 34

[42] Teague iii

clothing and the elaborate trappings of privilege created barriers that attempted to exclude others from stepping onto the stage of courtly life, they also existed for public display"[43]. These ulterior motivations prove that "consumption and display of luxury occurred not simply out of greed or self-indulgence but as a means to perpetuate the rights and privileges long established and to maintain a sense of honor amongst one's peers and those who sought to climb the social hierarchy"[44].

An additional consequence of the excessive spending among the nobility at Versailles was their resulting indebtedness to the King. So high were the standards of luxury, "A day at Court was worth a month's income, to live at Court a lifetime of debts"[45]. Fortunes were spent on "costumes"[46] alone, and the debts of the nobles "made them all the more beholden to the King for his favors, and so he encouraged their extravagances"[47]. As the force of the Sun King grew stronger, "noblemen and their wives mortgaged their estates and hurried to Versailles"[48]. The resulting reliance on the King only grew stronger with time, and "a new generation of courtiers, raised at Versailles, accepted and depended upon their monarch's generosity for their upkeep as courtly life at the palace drained the finances of many aristocratic families"[49]. And so Louis employed the conspicuous consumption of his Court in his favor, encouraging it through his own

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[43] Teague 31

[44] Teague 64

[45] Barry 146

[46] Barry 146

[47] Barry 146

[48] Barry 146

[49] Teague 40

spending, which upped the ante for what could be considered ‘fit for a king’, thereby increasing the debts of the nobility to the crown. As such, he gained another tool with which to prod his aristocracy in the direction of his choosing, coming a step closer to the domestication and demotion of the French nobility.

In his attempts to occupy and demean his Court so as to keep their attentions away from his absolutist centralization of power, Louis XIV utilized every avenue available to him. One of the most potent and least expensive was through “the order that Louis created amongst his courtiers, making the days structured and regimented, glorifying everyday activities into theatrical productions”[50]. Though these forms of court had existed throughout history, “Louis XIV polished [them] as if they were a silver mirror, in which the daily life, so often dull, shone like a pageant”[51]. Every aspect of the day was a performance, from the early morning when “numerous courtesans would gather to await the *Grand Lever du Roi* (the King’s formal awakening)”[52] until the evening, when the ceremony was reversed as the King prepared for bed. At Versailles, “these codes of etiquette and behavior existed not simply as a distraction for the extremely wealthy but as a stage that was constructed … fit for the image [Louis] was constructing for himself”[53]. The etiquette of Court was so emphasized by Louis XIV that it is said that “once when the wife of a foreign minister seated herself at the supper table above a duchess, Louis stared at the poor lady throughout the meal”[54]. Such public disapproval for the

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[50] Teague 35

[51] Barry 146

[52] Bonafoux 148

[53] Teague 31

[54] Barry 147

flouting of his rules solidified their importance to Louis' Court, further motivating the attention and compliance of the nobility as they desired to please their benefactor and King:

"In this continued drama of court routine lies part of the explanation of why French nobles left their great estates for a small room at Versailles… to be close to the King, to speak and be spoken to by him, to take precedence over others in closeness to him, was honor and ecstasy: the King was France incarnate"[55].

The cooperation of Louis's XIV's aristocracy in the loss of their own independence and autonomy is staggering; "the domestication of dukes and of an entire aristocracy, the centralization of power in the hands of a single sovereign, may never have received so perfected and *accepted* a framework of servility"[56]. Court life was simultaneously an intricate balance and an horrendous inequity where "what the aristocracy that lived at Versailles lacked in autonomy, it made up for in adherence to etiquette and the pursuit of new luxury items,"[57] the importance of these being elevated to that of independence.

Similar tactics also enabled the Sun King to expand the numbers of his increasingly dedicated nobility, "us[ing] the intricate court etiquette at Versailles to create more posts"[58]. There is no more illustrative example than "the Service of the King at *le Grand Commun*, where Louis XIV took his meals and required thirty-six gentlemen to attend him along with seventeen officials to oversee the seven offices associated with the dining service"[59]. This extensive

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[55] Barry 146

[56] Barry 146

[57] Teague 40

[58] Teague 37

[59] Teague 37

"creation of positions and titles" supported more than just Louis's projection of grandeur in that it also "allowed much needed revenue to flow back into the treasury as the holder of the post would have to pay a substantial fee to the State"[60]. In his memoirs to his son the Dauphin, Louis details a more personal reason for raising more and more men to the rank of noble, stating " 'it is one of the most visible signs of my power that I can give importance to a person who, in himself, has none' "[61]. This grandiose opinion of his own personal generosity is tempered by his own admission that " 'nothing moves the well-bred so much as distinctions in rank,' "[62] and move they did, stuck on the carousel of calculation and infatuation Louis so meticulously constructed. As their numbers swelled, so did the abundance of court intrigue that so fully absorbed and distracted the nobility at Versailles. Though "no allegory about mistrust [was] represented at Versailles… the subject is well-understood by all"[63]. With both the "newly ennobled persons and those within the aristocracy vying for positions of power wherever they could find them within Louis XIV's court,"[64] spies were "everywhere behind the scenes at Versailles"[65].

The relocation of the French aristocracy to Versailles, in combination with the manipulation, placation, and diversion that was court life there, forever changed France's noble class. As Louis XIV's rule progressed, "the aristocracy appeared much altered after several decades of being cloistered at Versailles, less likely to rebel against the monarchy as had

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[60] Teague 63

[61] Barry 146

[62] Barry 146

[63] Bonafoux 52

[64] Teague 63-4

[65] Bonafoux 52

happened during the Fronde"[66]. The nobles lost more than the propensity to rebel— "these aristocrats lived at the chateaux and subsidiary buildings surrounding Versailles… they no longer held the same connections to their ancestral lands and family estates"[67]. In a society where land ownership and family lineage were the basis for class standing, the voluntary near-abdication of these in return for proximity to the King implies an unimaginable forfeit of autonomy by the aristocracy.

Relocating the seat of the royal court to Versailles, the isolated swamp town removed from the centrality of Paris, also allowed Louis XIV to isolate his court from the entirety of France, as well as greater Europe. While "the Sun King's palace and park encompassed one world, it shut out the far greater other— and the forms of etiquette, the façades of Versailles were at least in part for that devised"[68]. This separation allowed Louis to personally consolidate control over foreign and domestic knowledge and relations. This "centralization of government did not equate to order on the whole"[69]. As such, "it is a paradox easily explained that the low point in Louis's reign was reached simultaneously with the high point in its social forms and influences;"[70] when distraction of the nobility was most necessary, Louis delivered it extravagantly. But "While the microcosm of Versailles could be structured and tempers assuaged with petty indulgences, the country itself dealt with its own subjects and other European nations

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[66] Teague 40

[67] Teague 40

[68] Barry 145

[69] Teague 39

[70] Barry 145

tenuously resulting in a period of general crisis"[71]. The disjoint between Versailles, which represented France to outsiders, and the nation's actual needs widened increasingly as time passed, and as a mechanism to further secure his power, "Louis XIV's attitude shifted from a guarded centrality to what can now be defined as absolutist policies"[72]. This complete authority supported and ensured the notion that "before Europe, appearances had to be brilliantly maintained"[73]. The resulting "centrality of the economy and the appearance of prosperity gave… the state control over luxury items made to suit the King's taste, [giving] Louis XIV significant control over what was being consumed by his Court,"[74] and the concentration of power through royal consumption continued its ornamented cycle.

Through the avenues detailed above, it is indisputable that Louis XIV achieved an unprecedented degree of control over his Court at Versailles, though it embodied "both a beauty and a beast; its loveliness only masked the tensions both inside and outside the palace gates, but, while aristocracy could be placated with fine furnishings, food, and trivial pastimes, those that sought those same profiles would not be so easily assuaged"[75]. Reflecting from this side of history, "one imagines that Louis XIV thought he could tame the nobility as he had tamed Versailles, but his efforts proved to be nothing more fruitful than hiding a broken mirror with a finely crafted tapestry— he only provided subterfuge to mask the problems rather than solving

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[71] Teague 39

[72] Teague 40

[73] Barry 165

[74] Teague 36

[75] Teague 46

them, unwittingly leaving his successors to deal with the repercussions"[76]. When "Louis XIV uttered his final words, [he] imparted that his legacy would be the State that he had built though he would be a part of it no longer. Those present at his side doubted that the regime he had instituted could last without its figurehead"[77].

[76] Teague 41

[77] Teague 42-3

Chapter II

Development of *L'Art de Pâtisserie*

In antiquity, the first forms of pastry arose from the Egyptians, who "gave their principle staple food all sorts of shapes and forms, and were thus the inventors of fancy baked goods," leading to their being called "the bread eaters"[78]. In Rome, "the introduction of Greek baking arts into Italy toward the end of the Republic was one of the factors leading to a decadence owed to Hellenistic influence"[79]. The Greeks differentiated this early pastry from other bread by "giving [it] the most extravagant forms, shaping it like mushrooms, braids, crescents, and so on"[80]. As a result of the isolation of the European Middle Ages, "there are almost no recipes for pastry in medieval collections; [though] scattered recipes appear in the sixteenth century"[81]. The "medieval tradition of drinking wine because it was safer than water persisted"[82] as a "the fondness for surprises… handed down from the nouveaux-riches of the last years of antiquity… became even more exaggerated in the Middle Ages"[83]. During the Renaissance, "in Europe a girdle-cake continued to exist, called in France *fouace* or *fougasse*, made of fine white unleavened wheat flour and cooked beneath coals or in a country oven"[84]. The "art of preserves

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[78] Revel, Jean-François. *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey through the History of Food*, 64.

[79] Revel 66

[80] Revel 68

[81] DeJean, Joan E. *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafés, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour*, 112.

[82] Eatwell, Piu Marie. *They Eat Horses, Don't They?: The Truth about the French*, 59.

[83] Revel 127

[84] Revel 65

and sweetmeats of all sorts is really the only truly new contribution to gastronomy made during the Renaissance,"[85] and this was crucial to the development of modern pastry.

An example of 'fouace'. Cooking in coals gave the bread a crispy crust.[86]

In France, pastry had historically been "defined as the art of making everything with a crust (meat pies were a big item)"[87]. As a result, "in this period, a cook who prepared any food…

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[85] Revel 141

[86] BBC GoodFood

[87] DeJean 112

in a baked crust was known as a *pâtissier* or pastry cook"[88]. A *tourte*, "an all-purpose pastry that lent itself both to salty entrées and to sweet desserts, or, as was very popular in this era, a mixture of the two… was a hollow pastry shell with a top crust made of pastry dough as well, of approximately the consistency of today's pizza; in the seventeenth century the *tourte* still reigned supreme, and it was to do so for more than a century afterward"[89]. Early pastry would today be nearly unrecognizable as the roots of the tradition of pâtisserie— "the cakes of this period were known as *casse-museaux* (jawbreakers), so named because they were so hard"[90].

Many believe "it [was] the cooks and the pastry-makers brought to France by Catherine de Médicis who are said to have completely revolutionized the art of gastronomy,"[91] pushing French cooking, baking and dining toward its contemporary standing. Though the French now dominate the culinary realm, "there are two points on which the Italians are the educators of Europe: the refinement of manners and the invention of pastry and sweetmeats"[92]. Specifically, "it is in the domain of sweets, preserves, fruit pastes, and constructions in sugar that the Italians were radical innovators,"[93] resulting from the early introduction of sugar to that region via Arabian traders[94]. This new knowledge combined with a series of developments in ingredient preference, technological changes and social forces to produce today's concept of pastry.

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[88] Revel 165

[89] Revel 164

[90] Revel 165

[91] Revel 119

[92] Revel 135

[93] Revel 140

[94] Gangi, Roberta. "Sugar Cane in Sicily."

The sudden appearance of sugar as a result of New World trade was a crucial factor in the development of the modern *art de pâtisserie*. Sweetness is redefined as France's New World colonies make possible for sugar to be readily available, and it begins to replace honey in recipes[95]. Though "sugar… was rare and costly at the time… and did not become a staple until the end of the seventeenth century,"[96] its developing use meant that "for the first time in Western cooking, a radical separation between sugar and salt went into effect… The new French chefs allowed salt and pepper to dominate until the end of the meal and gradually moved sweet dishes to the last course, which began to be called *le dessert*,"[97] derived from the verb *desservir*, which literally translates to 'to serve'. The historical translation is closer to 'to clear away,' signifying the course's place at the end of the meal. The amplified sweetness of sugar relative to honey, as well as its effect on food preparation, creating foods singularly sweet or salty, and consumption, the development of the dessert course, signifies the huge importance increasing availability of sugar had on the development of modern pastry.

Relatedly, as the use of honey lost favor to that of sugar, the "sweet-and-sour mixtures—often based on vinegar and honey— [that] were a staple of food preparation… were generally replaced by… butter"[98]. Today's *pâte feuilletée levée*, the base dough of croissant and other iconic breakfast pastry, would be impossible without butter, but in France "in the Middle Ages, poor people cooked with butter, while the rich preferred oil or lard"[99]. By the sixteenth century,

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[95] DeJean 113

[96] Revel 7

[97] DeJean 113

[98] DeJean 114

[99] DeJean 114

butter was "occasionally used,"[100] but only truly came into its own with the transition from honey to sugar.

A number of technological changes also contributed to the advent of pastry as it is known today. The invention of "'small ovens'— *petit fours*— which were later to be adapted to the baking of fancy pastry"[101] differentiated the baking of *pâtisserie* from that of *boulangerie*, the baking of bread. In "Lyon a book entitled *Basement de recites*… introduced into France the art of making jams, preserved fruit and candied orange peel"[102]. As for the fruit components of these sweets, "it was only in 1683 that Dr. Nicolas Venette became the first medical authority to say that it was good for you"[103]. There was also an increasing supply of fruit resulting from trade with the New World, as well as other European nations including Portugal. The combination of "better fruits [with] readily available sugar spelled jams and jellies,"[104] which in turn spurred on the refinement of pastry-making.

Occurring simultaneously to these developments in ingredient availability and technological know-how was "what seems to be a specifically French phenomenon— the periodic reseal of cuisine by chefs who seem to feel the need to reevaluate the state of the art roughly every fifty years"[105]. This social force encouraged development in the gastronomical

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[100] DeJean 114

[101] Revel 64

[102] Revel 140

[103] DeJean 115

[104] DeJean 116

[105] Schehr, Lawrence R., and Allen S. Weiss. *French Food: On the Table, on the Page, and in French Culture*, 71.

field, and "French cooking made perceptible progress during… the golden age of Louis XIV"[106]. This progress also helped to distinguish French food from others, as "from the sixteenth century onward European cuisines generally were moving in their separate directions, away from the commonalities of earlier culinary modes"[107]. Food, both in its consumption and in its preparation as an assertion of 'French-ness' began to take hold during this time. As such, the field of gastronomy gained increasing esteem, and "it was truly as if the status suddenly given to food had conferred on the new artists of its preparation… their 'own kind of nobility'"[108]. As a result, "by the end of Louis XIV's reign, the French style of food preparation had become an essential part of Paris's image as the capital of elegance and luxury"[109]. Recent developments in printing coupled together with these societal changes created what is now known as the Cookbook Revolution, led by that infamous *cuisinier*, La Varenne.

The Revolution began in 1651 when François Pierre, "a professional chef (in the seventeenth century this meant someone who ran the kitchen of a noble household) who borrowed the name of an illustrious precursor, that of Henri IV's cuisinier, La Varenne, and used it to sign a work… *Le Cuisinier français*"[110]. This now-infamous book compiled traditionally French recipes and disseminated them for use by any wealthy enough to purchase the book and literate enough to decipher it. Two years later, "*Le Cuisinier français* was followed… by an almost equally revolutionary volume, *Le Pâtissier français* (*The French Pastry Chef*), the earliest

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[106] Schehr and Weiss 72

[107] Schehr and Weiss 25

[108] DeJean 130

[109] DeJean 113

[110] DeJean 107

book devoted entirely to pastry," an art so little known at the time that "the first Dutch translation claimed that there were 'many major European cities where there is no one who can practice [it]'"[111]. The French Pastry Chef was innovative in both subject matter and scope:

"Before this, we have no way of knowing how any of the standard types of dough were made. *The French Pastry Chef* gives the original explanation of all the basic tricks of the pastry chef's trade. The modern way of making *pâte feuilletée*… was intrinsically codified here, as were many classics… *beignets, chansons aux pommel, choir, gafres*. Never before had there been recipes for gâteaux that we would still recognize as cakes"[112].

La Varenne's strategy was quickly imitated— "Massialot… introduced meringues and… creme brûlée," and "chocolate made its first appearance in his cookbook"[113]. As this information disseminated, pastry began to take on a life of its own in a new way, with *l'art de pâtisserie* ever evolving away from general bread-baking. Up until 1690, the word *macaron "*was used interchangeably to refer to both cookie and macaroni pasta in France,"[114] but as pastry gained traction, the two words became distinct, illustrating a cultural recognition of a new culinary art form . The Cookbook Revolution contributed to the "consequent identifactory power of cuisine as a fundamental attribute of 'Frenchness' and the high rank of the gastronomic field in the hierarchy of cultural fields in France"[115] by codifying and unifying the haute cuisine of the day;

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[111] DeJean 112

[112] DeJean 112

[113] DeJean 118

[114] Meyers, Cindy. "The Macaron and Madame Blanchez", 16.

[115] Schehr and Weiss 9

the effect on pâtisserie was an elevation to the same realm of cultural identity as that enjoyed by broader gastronomy.

A further result of this process was that "cooking and eating began more and more to be thought of no longer as a simple necessity but as a domain in which sophistication was possible and desirable"[116]. Aside from the Cookbook Revolution, there was also an influx of books aimed at maitres d'hôtels of great houses, teaching them how to execute great dinner parties[117], illustrating the major role of food in the society of the day. Contemporary "seventeenth-century works such as *The Art of Fine Entertaining* stress… that the most important guests will never be satisfied with less than spectacular table composition— a dress rehearsal is even advised to make sure that the design mapped out will live up to expectations"[118]. Increasing emphasis on presentation of food also influenced its consumption, as in "a treatise on good manners attributed to a certain Nolfi and addressed to ladies of the nobility, published during the second half of the seventeenth century, [which] recommends… that one should not carry away in one's handkerchief or one's muff sweets that are served as dessert"[119]. Improved manners and the recent widespread adoption of flatware were of course crucial to the success of such elegant dinner parties; as a result, "by the eighteenth century… the manners and customs of the elite diner were also changing"[120]. The heightened importance of food among the upper classes resulting from the dissemination of cookbooks and hosting manuals made meals into social

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[116] DeJean 118

[117] DeJean 121-2

[118] DeJean 120

[119] Revel 139

[120] Williams, S. J. S. *Dining and Revelry in French Rococo Art*, 9.

constructs, where hierarchies could be displayed and reinforced, and wealth projected. During this "era of culinary innovation… changes were made in preparation and styles of food and dining, as well as dining practices"[121].

An additional social factor contributing to the proliferation of *pâtisserie* as the highest of French gastronomic arts was the introduction of the modern restaurant in Paris. For the first time, creations of famous chefs were available to any who could afford the price of a table, not only those who employed them within their households. The cultural value of food had been recognized and now capitalized upon in the form of restaurants; the people of Paris began to eat better, and the standards of cuisine were elevated. In regards to pastry, "from the start pastries were a specialty of chic cafés"[122]. The introduction of restaurants and cafés made pastry more widely known than ever, a trend strengthened by "the pairing of coffee and pastry… invented in the original high-end cafés about two decades after the publication of the first cookbook devoted entirely to pastry,"[123] La Varenne's *Le Pâtissier français*. As demand for pastry increased, its means of distribution changed as well; "initially, all baked goods were prepared on the premises, but by 1691, Nicolas de Blégny… lists several shops that made all manner of pastry in bulk for resale in cafés"[124].

Seventeenth-century France saw a host of changes, both social and technological, that contributed toward the development of *l'art de pâtisserie* into its recognizable modern form. A

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[121] Williams 3

[122] DeJean 143

[123] DeJean 143

[124] DeJean 143

new distinction between chefs de cuisine and pastry cooks followed from the recent separation of sweet and salty in French cooking, as well as from the creation of a separate dessert course, and "the culinary inventions of the eighteenth century are used by every chef to the present"[125]. The influence of the Italians on French pastry persists through the use of preserves and constructions of sugar. The Cookbook Revolution elevated gastronomy to esteem amongst the highest of French arts and made public for the first time many traditional methods and recipes; La Varenne's *Le Pâtissier français* was the first work devoted entirely to pastry. Dissemination of cookbooks led to publication of works instructing French readers on how best to serve and eat the foods prepared in their homes, and the introduction of restaurants drew the wealthy out into the public sphere to take their meals. Changes in food preparation including shifts from honey to sugar and oil to butter made the basis of modern pastry possible. In further chapters, this project will discuss how the social effects of pastry's development contributed to its role as one of the mechanisms employed by King Louis XIV to distract his Court at Versailles with opulence and frivolity while he consolidated his absolutist power.

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[125] Williams 4

Chapter III:

Fine Food, Louis XIV, *Les Fêtes*, and *L'Art de Pâtisserie*

The Power of Fine Food

The consumption of fine food is powerful; it communicates health and excess, wealth and power. Both quality and quantity matter here, and the "high nobility and more refined townspeople were, of course, well served, their tables so prodigiously laden that guests consumed barely a third of what was offered"[126]. Not only was there a huge quantity of food at each meal, but the count of daily meals themselves changed according to one's social standing:

> "Before the Revolution, people in good society ate three times a day: they had something between six and eight in the morning, then dined at about two o'clock and supped after nine o'clock. Peasants and laborers made due with two meals. Supper was reserved for the privileged minority who went to balls or performances"[127]

The purpose of food goes beyond nourishment, because though "food is crucial to all humans,… it may be even more essential to the rich and famous because of these multiple connotations with prestige, codes (of behavior), and display of sheer power"[128]. As such, food cannot be ignored in a discussion about a king's manipulation and seizure of power from his ruling class. Discussed in detail in a previous chapter, a series of gastronomical advances occurring simultaneously with the royal court's relocation to Versailles present the question of

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[126] Muhlstein, Anka, and Andreas Gurewich. *Balzac's Omelette: A Delicious Tour of French Food and Culture with Honoré De Balzac,* 31.

[127] Muhlstein 38

[128] Vooght, Daniëlle de. *Royal Taste: Food, Power and Status at the European Courts After 1789,* 3.

how changes in French food creation and culture effected the expression of power through the consumption of fine food. As argued by de Vooght, "the consumption of rich food— in terms of quantity and quality— was and undoubtedly is a manner of showing one's social status, creating or maintaining power, or aspiring to powerful circles"[129]. Schehr and Weiss go a step further, asserting that "food works as a total social phenomenon to mold institutions no less than individual behavior"[130]. It follows, then, that changes in the culinary scene of France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries— *pâtisserie* specifically reached the level of an art form at this time— would affect the institutions of the day through the changes they inspired in individual consumption habits. At the societal level, "the social and cultural importance of food has been examined and confirmed at length by anthropological, sociological, and historical research, which has ascribed to it status, identity, and power"[131]. This is especially true for French food because of the high esteem awarded to it in the minds of French people, a result of the work of many that culminated in the Cookbook Revolution. The result remains today that "'French' [is] not a geographical but a social reference, and French cuisine was French by virtue of the court and the aristocracy"[132].

Furthermore, "food consumption not only reflects power and status, but it also demonstrates the quest for power and status, regardless of the lack of either ownership or affluent income"[133]. In the era of Versailles, where aristocrats mortgaged their centuries-old estates and

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[129] Vooght 2

[130] Schehr and Weiss 31

[131] Vooght 1

[132] Schehr and Weiss 25

[133] Vooght 1

accrued massive debts to remain in the favor of the king, the expression of want for power is just as, if not more, important than that of true power. In their menagerie-esque existences, enraptured by the novelty, excesses, and structures of court life at Versailles, the French nobility possessed only the quest for power, not the actual thing itself. In a letter to her daughter, "Madame de Sévigné revealed how peas were a major subject of conversation at Versailles: 'The impatience to eat them, the pleasure to have eaten them and the joy at eating them again are the three issues with which our Princes have been concerned for the last few days'"[134]. The use of food as distraction is captured here, as is its role in reinforcing hierarchies— it is the princes who have the privilege of eating novel foods.

Louis XIV and the Ritual of the Dinner Service

As is recorded at length, the "*Roi Soleil* ('Sun King') was himself a legendary gourmand, capable of putting away gigantic quantities of food at a sitting"[135]. His lunch, "known as l*e petit couvert* ('the little table'), although there was nothing little about it— would typically consist of four different bowls of soup, a whole stuffed pheasant, a partridge, chicken, duck, mutton with garlic gravy, two pieces of ham, hard-boiled eggs, three enormous salads and a plateful of pastries, fruit and jam"[136]. For Louis XIV, "supper was… a spectacle reserved for the Court. His appetite was fabulous; he fed it with his fingers, [though] among gentlefolk in Paris forks were already in general use"[137]. The physical handling of his food expressed his kingly privilege and

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[134] Bonafoux 209

[135] Eatwell 18

[136] Eatwell 18-9

[137] Barry 150

evoked an appreciation of primal pleasures in his audience; "it is said that Louis XIV never touched a fork in his life"[138]. The experience of supping with the King was so impressive that even those close to him, like his sister-in-law Madame La Palatine, who felt compelled to describe it in detail in letters home to her family[139]. Legend holds that "on Louis's death, his stomach and intestines were found to be twice the size of an ordinary man's"[140]. With the large presence it held at his Court, "it is not surprising that French cuisine burgeoned during Louis' reign," during which "the ritual of the dinner service became established"[141]:

> The King's food "made its own appearance in a ceremony approaching that of a High Mass… the most important ritual of all: the *cortege de la viande de Sa Majesté*, the procession of His Majesty's meat. It was preceded by two royal guards, an usher, the *maître d'hôtel*… followed by the equerry of the kitchen, the *garde-vaisselle* and two others of the King's guards. A courtier encountering the King's meat on the way to the King's table was obliged… to remove his hat and bow to it as to the King himself"[142].

Louis's mealtime ritual was extreme, but not unique; "for rulers with aspirations or delusions of absolutism, the formal Baroque and Rococo forms of dining— replicate with waiters in starched wigs, mirrored walls and gilt ceilings, as well as *grandes pièces montées*, virtual towers of food— sent a clear political message… we intend to dine as we would rule, in

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[138] DeJean 126

[139] Barry 150

[140] Eatwell 19

[141] Eatwell 19

[142] Barry 149

grand formal style befitting majesty"[143]. Creating such requirements around food also expressed its importance to the King, and therefore elevated its importance in the eyes of the entire Court that strove to be close to him. At Versailles, "as at many other European courts, public dining rituals elaborated spectacular displays of status and power that reinforced attachment to ruler and court through the manipulation of social distance and spatial proximity"[144]. So influential was Louis's style of dining that "just as European aristocracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries spoke and wrote French, so too it 'ate French'"[145].

Les Fêtes

The public dining ritual at Versailles was never expressed more fully than at one of Louis XIV's infamous *fêtes.* In "the late 1650's to the early 1670's, Vatel orchestrated some of the grandest fêtes of an age that set new standards for entertaining on a grand scale"[146]. Louis, who employed Vatel at the end of his life, took these standards to ever greater heights through the grand parties he hosted at Versailles. As King, "Louis gave at least equal time to the pursuit of pleasures and diversions,"[147] and the fetes, often decreed for each of his new mistresses, reflect an "inability for the King to give up his own personal wants"[148]. "Through the ages, culinary delights and amorous pleasures have been connected, the one often naturally leading to the

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[143] Vooght 24

[144] Schehr and Weiss 14

[145] Schehr and Weiss 26

[146] DeJean 127

[147] Barry 78

[148] Teague 40

other;"[149] Louis utilized this relationship as a mechanism to further distract his relocated Court. The connection between *les fêtes* and Louis's promiscuity also expresses his mastery of "the social utility of pleasure… the two most powerful principles of which are sex and food"[150]. With the grand parties being held in honor of his mistresses, Louis used sexual misconduct and public promiscuity to envelop his Court in a shroud of gossip and jealousies that further concealed his consolidation of power. To attain the greatest pleasures for his nobility, he employed fine food to the same ends, delighting his partygoers through his belief that "to as great a degree as sexuality, food is inseparable from imagination"[151].

For each new mistress, Louis would "decree a *fête*, filling the air from twilight until dawn with the sounds of gaiety, feasting, and fireworks"[152]. One of his grandest, *Les Plaisirs de l'isle enchantée*, given for Louise de la Vallière, "lasted one night [and] cost over one hundred thousand *livres*"[153]. In keeping with the theme of the enchanted island, "Diana and Pan appeared, their attendants offered meats, and the Court sat down to supper"[154]. True to his exclusionary style, only "the King and the more privileged were served a banquet of five courses, each of fifty-size dishes; throughout the park were laden tables for the others"[155] not granted to privilege of a seated meal in proximity to Louis. Dessert was no less extravagant— "pears, apricots,

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[149] Muhlstein 189

[150] Schehr and Weiss 31

[151] Revel 8

[152] Barry 67

[153] Barry 86

[154] Barry 79

[155] Barry 87

peaches, Dutch gooseberries and Portuguese oranges— preserved and fresh— hung from the trees. There was a … castle of marzipan and sugar, whose leveling… was a considerable part of the pleasure"[156].

Louis XIV mastered the use of food not only to visibly communicate his own wealth and excessive lifestyle, but to motivate the same attitudes in his Court and create further desires of luxury and reliance on himself amongst the aristocracy at Versailles. As described above, the power of fine food reaches far beyond a portrayal of abundance to affect individual behavior as well as the functioning of society at an institutional level. A study of the relationship between food and power, with the overlapping themes of promiscuity, shows that the Sun King employed these earthly pleasures as mechanism to enchant, and thereby further entrap, the nobility of his Court. There is no better evidence of this method in action than *les grands fêtes* thrown at Versailles. These findings cast a new light on the gluttonous reputation of Louis XIV as not simply greed or ravenousness, but yet another means to further his absolutist agenda.

L'Art de Pâtisserie at Versailles

As Louis XIV spared no expense in the construction of his Palace, neither did he hold back in his total distraction of the nobility he confined in its walls. The quintessential absolutist, Louis XIV was the state[157]; this consolidation of power was made possible through the complete opulence of the lifestyle he created at Versailles, and even more so through the jealousies and competitions it fostered. In this intricate game, pastry was employed to satiate the appetites of the nobles, both literal and otherwise.

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[156] Barry 86

[157]"*L'état, c'est moi*" was the legendary assertion supposedly made by Louis XIV to his Parliament in 1655.

As observed by Carême, "the fine arts are five in number, namely: painting, sculpture, poetry, music, and architecture, the principle branch of the latter being pastry"[158]. At Versailles, pastry for its own sake was only one aspect of the draw of the dessert course. Imaginative and extravagant presentation was also key, and "the concept of '*pièces montées'* (decoratively mounted confectionary centerpieces) made its entrance in Versailles"[159]. As with everything at Louis XIV's court, only the grandest offerings would suffice, and so pastry came to play an integral role in the consumption habits of the Court.

> "In 1660 a pâtissier in Saint-Jean-de-Luz sent his prettiest servant to deliver a platter of his speciality to the Queen Mother, who shared them with newlyweds Louis XIV and Maria Theresa of Spain"[160].

This anecdote confirms the rarity of pastry in the early days of the Sun King's reign, when the art form was in the stages of refinement. The novelty of the foods and the implied expense of their ingredients made pastry a perfect fit for use by Louis XIV at Versailles. As the dessert course continued to diverge from the rest of the meal, sweets came to be "considered to be elegant foods, whereas sausages or a *galimafrée* would have taken away the poetry of a collation"[161]. Pastry "tended to be more expensive" and was "out of the ordinary in form and/or composition,"[162] a notion embraced by Louis XIV as he continued to employ new and different

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[158] Revel 68

[159] "French Pastry"

[160] Meyers 17

[161] Revel 140

[162] Chevallier, Jim. *August Zang and the French Croissant: How Viennoiserie Came to France,* 14.

ways to occupy his relocated nobility at Versailles. Given the time period, "the social significance of sugar consumption could hardly be neglected: as a rare and costly substance, its very consumption expressed a kind of power"[163].

The connection between sweets and sovereigns was not invented by Louis XIV—centuries earlier, "when Bocaccio portrays the ruling aristocracy of the day, he shows it eating sweets"[164]. The attempt of a monarch to impress his subjects with food has "ample historical precedents" as kings possess "the financial wherewithal and staff to execute any whim"[165]. At the Versailles of Louis XIV, increased expectations of luxury meant that only the heights of contemporary gastronomical innovation would impress the aristocracy. These resulted from a combination of societal emphasis on fine eating and entertaining as well as from the culture designed and emphasized by the King himself. As "the ritual of the dinner service became established… it is not surprising that French cuisine burgeoned during Louis' reign"[166]. The technological changes in baking in the seventeenth century perfectly positioned pastry to fulfill these heightened expectations.

Further requiring gastronomical dominance at Versailles was the burgeoning restaurant scene in Paris. Previously, "the ability to make at all times consumption choices, thus, was the privilege of a small elite" who "used quantity as well as quality of food to enjoy and express material comfort and prestige"[167]. In these times, "the culinary arts were associated with the

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[163] Vooght 1

[164] Revel 7

[165] Vooght 16

[166] Eatwell 19

[167] Vooght 4

court and the aristocracy, not the nation"[168]. But "the rise of the restaurant meant that the pleasures of the table were no longer reserved exclusively for the happy few invited to attend the great banquets at Versailles and other château[x]."[169] The introduction of restaurants changed the gastronomical scene in Paris to the end result that anyone who could afford a table could eat well; and so the King was required to publicly and expressively show that he ate better. The novel art of pastry allowed Louis XIV to do exactly this.

Technological and societal changes in the early seventeenth century created a climate perfect for the development and refinement of pastry in France. These same altering forces also required Louis XIV to employ increasingly grander means to successfully occupy and distract his nobility at Versailles. As discussed at length in previous chapters, policies of court etiquette remained his major tool of doing so by using proximity to himself as a reward mechanism, as well as a strategy to inspire petty jealousies; but, manipulation of the nobility through simpler distractions was achieved by the use of fine food, specifically the novel art of pastry, whose concurrent refinement and perceived exclusivity made it the perfect distractionary device for Louis XIV.

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[168] Schehr and Weiss 8

[169] DeJean 123

Chapter IV:

Experiential Learnings

I had the opportunity to travel to Paris, France on a Plan II Thesis Grant to supplement my research with experiential learning. During my trip, I focused on two the domains of research that have shaped this project: the art of pastry, and the *Château de Versailles*. Because the status of pastry in the gastronomical and social spheres has been a topic of research throughout this project, I also wanted to incorporate some more colloquial findings as a way of addressing the modern French person's relationship with *l'art de pâtisserie*. This final chapter details my experience in Paris and the resulting learnings, as well as some additional research these inspired.

Course in Pastry

I began my first morning in Paris the way any American tourist would— at one of the three bakeries on the street next to the apartment I'd rented for the week, located in the Latin Quarter, just around the corner from the Luxembourg Gardens. Not wanting to fill up on *croissant* before learning to make them, I chose a *crêpe* and an espresso. Traveling into the city from the airport the night before had left me quite impressed with the functionality of my French, but this impression faded as I realized that when I addressed both the cashier at the bakery and the receptionist at the pastry school, I was answered in English. Undeterred, I settled in and waited for my class to begin.

I chose the school La Cuisine Paris because the classes were taught in English by dual-language Parisians and the school offered a wide range of subjects. Additionally, all instructors were certified pastry chefs; we learned that in France, this occupation requires formal education

and a degree, unlike in the U.S. and elsewhere where a student can apprentice his way to becoming a pastry chef. Predictably, classes focused on the trendy *macaron* were full months in advance, but I chose instead to focus on classic *viennoiserie*, as this form of pastry is closest to what was developing and would have been available during the time of Louis XIV. Our pastry chef, Eric, explained that the name viennoiserie means 'things of Vienna', and that these pastries are so named because they originated in Austria, not France.

This brought to mind the popular story that Marie Antoinette, an Austrian princess, brought this Viennese delicacy with her to the French court in the eighteenth century. Having always written off this tale as historical fiction, I was intrigued to have the Viennese roots of the pastry form confirmed by our instructor, and voiced this to a Parisian friend over dinner one night. His responding story was even more fanciful: croissant had been invented even earlier, by the Ottoman empire. As legend goes, the Ottomans were at war with the Turks, their historical rivals, and the Turks were in the process of invading an Ottoman stronghold by digging a tunnel below the exterior walls and right into the kitchens of the castle. The Turks worked by night, and so the only person awake to hear to the noise of the digging was the resident baker, as his craft required him to start in the early hours of the morning. The baker alerted the guards of the fort, they attacked the Turks from the rear and achieved an historic victory. In celebration, the baker shaped his bread that morning into crescent moons, in mockery of the Turkish flag, and the precursor of *croissant* was born.

I was enamored by this story— after all, what greater insult is there than to take a bite out of someone's national symbol? I did some additional research and learned that while entertaining, neither the Marie Antoinette nor the Turkish Invasion story hold true. By the early

seventeenth century, there did exist in Austria "a roll in the shape of the Turkish crescent," but "this roll, of course, would have been a *kipfel*, not a croissant, [though] few writers make that distinction"[170]. In fact, "the kipfel existed well before 1683 [the time of the Turkish Invasion], and so any story setting its invention at that time would be suspect from the start"[171]. Still, the Turkish Invasion story in particular has been cited in many works as fact, a mistake that "baldly demonstrates the cavalier attitude with which even serious food historians present colorful tales"[172]. In regards to the myth that Marie Antoinette brought croissant to France from Austria, "if… one accepts the idea that Austrian bakers had only a century before invented the ancestor of the croissant, it is but a short step to imagine that this Austrian princess then brought it to France;"[173] though as stated above, the kipfel had been in existence for some time prior to her marriage to Louis XVII and relocation to Versailles. This story also contradicts the court culture of Versailles that is a focus of this project:

> "French queens in general, and Marie Antoinette in particular, were closely watched and chronicled. Had Marie Antoinette brought any food into fashion the fact would have been widely mentioned in the gossip sheets of the time… Marie Antoinette's consumption of her native treats appears to have had no wider influence (which is surprising, given the attention paid to every royal move)."[174]

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[170] Chevallier 9

[171] Chevallier 11

[172] Chevallier 10

[173] Chevallier 11

[174] Chevallier 11-2

Importantly, "the first, scattered references to the croissant as a pastry do not appear in print until over fifty years after the death of France's Austrian-born queen"[175]. When they did become subjects of printed works, "croissants were listed as 'breads of fantasy and luxury,'"[176] a description that encompasses their novelty as well as the delight felt by those who ate them. While the baked goods called *viennoiserie* are created in a style originating in Vienna with the *kipfel*, they were first crafted from bread dough and merely shaped into crescents. Imported Viennese breads appeared in France during the reign of Louis-Philippe[177], brought by a baker (who didn't bake) named August Zang. Zang's "true talents were very modern ones: identifying, developing and managing new businesses and business models,"[178] not baking, and so he recruited bakery workers in Vienna and returned to Paris to found his famous bakery, in which he remained and worked for only about a year. He did "obtain a patent… for the invention and perfection of bread making methods,"[179] as his creations were made from bread dough. The use of a sweetened, leavened dough to create *viennoiserie* is a uniquely French invention that came later and ultimately gave life to the croissant[180].

The issue of their origins resolved, the viennoiserie of focus in the course included: *pain au chocolat*, or chocolate croissant; *pain aux raisins*, a pinwheel croissant filled with white

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[175] Chevallier 12

[176] Chevallier 14

[177] Chevallier 16

[178] Chevallier 17

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raisins and pastry cream; and *pain suisse*, stuffed with chocolate and pastry cream. All of these are crafted from the same dough as the traditional croissant, the infamously labor intensive *pâte feuilletée levée*. This literally translates to leavened puff pastry and has a texture somewhere between the delicate flakiness of puff pastry and the heartiness of French bread. The dough is made similarly to that of puff pastry, but with added yeast, butter and sugar for a richer, sweeter taste profile. The creation of *pâte feuilletée levée* is an ordeal usually requiring a full 24-hours; to make possible a day-long course ending with finished pastries, the dough was ready when we arrived to the class.

In keeping with earlier assertions about changes in food consumption in France in the seventeenth century, our instructor began by educating the class about the importance of the ingredients used— specifically, of using French butter, which contains around 86% fat content (82% is standard in the U.S.). Eric also described the differences between flour varieties; we would be using cake flour, which is milled from only the very tops of the wheat plant and is the lightest and softest available. Bread flour, milled from the entire plant, is the heaviest, and all-purpose flour is milled from the top of the plant and some of the stalk, and falls somewhere in the middle. Even Zang in his early bakery understood the importance of fine ingredients, "specifying the use of fine flour and milk"[181] for the creation of his pastries.

The first third of the class was spent rolling out the dough and layering it with cold butter. This is done through a process called laminating. To begin, a baker rolls a block of butter into a thin rectangle using parchment paper and a rolling pin. The parchment paper is creased into a sort of envelope that helps manipulate the butter into the desired shape. Then, the butter is

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returned to the refrigerator to stay cold while the dough itself is rolled out into a long, thin rectangle, about three times as long and two inches wider than the rectangle of butter. The butter is then placed over the bottom third portion of the dough, and a ‘simple fold’ is performed to surround the butter with dough: the top third of the dough is folded down over the butter, and then the second third is folded over top of the first. This action creates the layers seen when one bites into a croissant; the butter melts during baking, and the steam from the evaporating liquid creates space between these layers. After the first fold, there are five layers of pastry and butter. The dough is rolled back to the original rectangle shape and re-folded. This time, a ‘double fold’ is required: the top quarter of the dough is folded down over the third quarter, and the bottom quarter is folded up over the second. The resulting dough now contains 10 layers. A third roll and a second ‘simple fold’ bring the total number of layers up to about 40, all separated by cold butter. The laminating process is identical regardless of the variety of viennoiserie being made; it’s in the cutting and shaping phases that the recipes begin to diverge and different pastries take shape.

The author works the dough into the desired shape, using a rolling pin.

Traditional *croissant* is formed from the *pâte feuilletée levée*; after shaping the finished dough into a rectangle with clean sides, it is cut into long isosceles triangles, which are then gently stretched by hand before being rolled using the palm of the hand into the familiar coil of dough, and shaped into the famous crescent for which the pastry is named. A trick of the trade is

to bake croissant with the smallest point of dough facing down to avoid it unfurling in the oven, though the pastry is typically pictured with this feature face-up.

Rolled and shaped croissants, ready for proofing and baking.

Chocolate croissant, or *pain au chocolat*, is traditionally from squares of croissant dough rolled around long, thin sticks of high-quality, semi-sweet chocolate. The resulting shape is a rounded rectangle, not a crescent moon. We learned a trick to wrap the chocolate in the dough in

one fluid motion, rather than performing two or three spirals and leaving the dough finger-printed and uneven.

The final two varieties of *viennoiserie* include pastry cream, *crème pâtissière*. This is made by boiling milk with vanilla and incorporating egg, sugar, cornstarch, and butter to create a thick, luxurious custard with a white color and a slightly sweet taste. For the *pain aux raisin*, this is spread over the dough and topped with white raisins, re-hydrated in boiled water. The filled dough is then spiraled into a pinwheel shape. For the *pain suisse*, the custard is topped with miniature chocolate chips and folded in on itself to create a bar-shaped pastry with layers of custard, chocolate, and dough. Always keeping wastefulness in mind, the trimmings from shaping the rectangles of dough were tossed with cinnamon and sugar and shaped into petite cinnamon buns.

As our creations sat proofing (rising) in a lukewarm oven, the second half of the class shifted to focus on preparing the dough, which we would leave for the next day's class to cut and shape into their own *viennoiserie*. In the basement kitchen, with walls that appeared to have been carved from the bedrock of the city, it was only fitting that we would learn the traditional method of creating the dough by hand, not using modern kitchen appliances— not even using bowls! We worked with piles of flour directly on the table, incorporating yeast, water, and melted butter into a mixture of flour, sugar, and salt using our hands. We worked through three different traditional methods of kneading, using the dough itself to clean up the mess left on the table, ensuring all ingredients were incorporated in full. Eric also taught us to rip the dough to test for elasticity, as an elastic dough is the goal of the kneading process. Once finished, we wrapped the dough and

left it to refrigerate overnight, just in time to pull our finished pastries out of the oven where they'd been set to bake.

The finished pastries (clockwise from top): croissant, pain aux raisins, pain suisse, and pain au chocolat.

Walking away from the pastry course, I had a bag laden with *viennoiserie* and a deepened appreciation for the intricate art that is *la pâtisserie*. Learning about the required ingredients and

techniques to make the pastries correctly helped me to understand why the development of pastry occurred over centuries and across borders, all culminating in the French achievement of perfecting the art.

Le Palais de Versailles

My initial impression of the Palace of Versailles was of the centrality of its location within the town— one can see in the layout of the surrounding roads and buildings the development through history of the town, all centered around the palace, as was the world under Louis XIV. Nowhere is his legacy better preserved, beginning with an imposing statue of the Sun King on horseback as one approaches the gates of the palace.

To skip the initial line to enter the palace, I took advantage of the *lever du roi*, the tongue-in-cheek name for the breakfast special at Ore, the café inside the palace. The café, complete with gold panelling and tables in homage to the artistry of the surrounding palace, offered a great introduction for what was to come. The meal I enjoyed was of surprisingly high quality, though the descriptions on the menu were my favorite part, especially the one explaining the café's name: "a reference to the pleasures of the mouth anchored in French art-de-vivre and in particular to Versailles". Even centuries later as tourists flock the grounds, the connection between fine food and Versailles persists, solidifying the grounds of this project and thoroughly exciting its author.

Our tour of the palace began with the apartments of Mesdames, the daughters of Louis XV. These rooms had originally been constructed as Louis XIV's bath chambers, containing a large vestibule, two separate rooms, and two bathrooms. These were even more splendidly decorated in gold, marble, and works of art than the State Apartments, which survive today. While beautiful, these apartments offered more in terms of how Versailles has changed throughout time rather than any insight into the Versailles of Louis XIV.

Madame Adelaïde's private chamber, furnished with fixtures from her favorite residence, Bellevue.

Moving on to the State Apartments, the experience was much more in line with what I had initially expected to see at Versailles. The lavish decoration from floor to ceiling continually occupies the eye. In homage to the legacy of the Sun King, even those who come to Versailles on a mission to see the most famous room, *La galerie des Glaces* (the Hall of Mirrors), cannot do so in isolation, but must first pass alongside the royal chapel and through the State Apartments to the War Room, forcing guests throughout history, from visiting kings and nobles to modern tourists, to revel in the glories of French art, military victory, royal wealth and dominant power before reaching their end goal. The State Apartments contained all those embellishments that make Versailles uniquely and aggressively regent-centric. The inclusion of ancient myth and

allegory in support of the Sun King's Divine Right and egocentricity permeates the exquisite artwork that fills the rooms. The intervening centuries of wear have had little effect on the impression of grandeur instilled in all visitors. The Mercury Room, Louis XIV's ceremonial bedchamber, felt like the culmination of all the preceding rooms. A lavishly decorated bedroom, never used for sleeping but instead used to receive guests, asserts the lack of distinction between the public and private lives of Louis XIV; after all, a king who 'is the state' does not take time off from being so.

A walk through the reflective, light-filled beauty of the Hall of Mirrors continues this assertion of luxury, an effect that would have been even more highly felt during the time of its construction when mirrors were an expensive rarity. The grandiose painting and gilding on the ceiling is so dense as to be nearly overwhelming, yet somehow fits in perfect harmony with the large glass windows and large mirrored panels that line the walls. A number of chandeliers also lend their sparkle to the game of reflection played by light as it enters and bounces around the room, faster even than the eye of the tourist who attempts to take it all in. It takes little imagination to picture this hall as an assertion of French superiority in the arts, both fine and that of war, as well as of the supremacy of French kings.

From the Hall of Mirrors, one enters Louis XIV's private apartments (if anything in the life of the Sun King can be said to have been 'private'). The small initial chamber has undergone significant renovations since the time of Louis XIV. It was previously two distinct rooms: the King's Cabinet, where he held council meetings, and the Cabinet des Termes, a private space for the King to share with family and selected guests. True to form, this separation allowed the King more exclusivity in choosing who would be admitted from the public into the private chambers.

These rooms were often utilized for the official presentations required to enter the Court, a location well-picked; after a walk through the Hall of Mirrors, any aspiring Courtier would be sufficiently intimidated as to please Louis XIV. The two rooms were combined under the reign of Louis XV.

The King's bedchamber sits beyond this room and is truly splendid in red and gold brocade, a fitting theatre for the ceremonial performances of the King's waking up and going to bed. The room is situated in the exact center of the Eastern wing of the chateau, an obviously strategic location. A golden alcove separates the area occupied by the bed from the rest of the room, dividing the King's personal space from that where nobles would stand to see and be seen by His Majesty. A hierarchy of invitation was imposed on admittance to the bedchamber, ranging from privileged entry to petty entry, designed to communicate the King's preference for certain nobles and, as a result, to create competition and jealousies among them. The King's Apartments conclude with the Bull's Eye antechamber, named for the oddly-shaped window that overlooks the room, which was made larger to accommodate more Courtiers waiting outside the King's bedchamber, and who's white and gold color scheme shows the changing tastes of Louis XIV later in life. The next room is the Royal Table Antechamber, where Louis XIV dined in public on occasions less formal than those requiring the invitation of the entire royal family. Here, he would sit with his back to the hearth over a prodigiously laden table. A guard's room, simply decorated by comparison, completes the King's 'private' wing of Versailles.

A tapestry depicting le grand lever du roi, hanging in the Louvre Museum.

From the château, visitors continue on to the infamously expansive gardens, occupied by castles that complete the estate. The Estate of Trianon is referred to as "the Domain of Marie-Antoinette" because the Queen favored these smaller residences and made significant alterations to their surrounding landscapes. The Grand Trianon was originally constructed as a private residence for Louis XIV and one of his mistresses, Madame de Maintenon. Most of the rooms

remain unaltered from their original appearance; the most splendid of these is the Mirror Room, whose sumptuous decoration evokes the same admiration as the much larger Hall of Mirrors in the main *château*. This room was used for council meetings, further proving that even in a palace built for it, privacy was by design an intangible illusion for Louis XIV.

The Petit Trianon was completed during the reign of Louis XV and gifted to Marie Antoinette in 1774. This residence was her escape from Court life, and she became so fond of the estate that she had new projects commissioned on the surrounding grounds. The greatest of these is the Queen's Hamlet, an entire mock village complete with a windmill and dairy, with rustic exterior done in the Normandy style, but whose interior rooms were just as lavish as those elsewhere at Versailles. The Queen used the estate for the education of her children as well as for private parties. The initial impression is of the ignorance of a monarch to design a large-scale playground in the style of how so many of her subjects lived their day-to-day lives. This assumption fits well with the stereotypical reputation of Marie Antoinette as dangerously frivolous, but fails to account for the fact that the Hamlet was not the first constructed of its kind. Such stylized additions to estates, which today seem to visitors to be something like the original amusement park, were quite popular at the time and appear on a number of famous estates. Furthermore, Marie Antoinette lived with the legacy of Louis XIV, which included the grandeur and power subscribed to the monarchy, but also the complete, constant focus of the entire court and a total lack of privacy. As such, it's hardly shocking that the Queen had a desire for removal from the spotlight that followed her every move.

My time spent in Paris contributed more to this project than I originally anticipated. The ability to situate my research in time and space by walking the halls of Versailles deepened my

understanding of the historical analysis of preceding chapters. The informal learning that happened in conversation, while on tours or reading pamphlets could not have been reproduced without this experience. Learning to create pastry in the French style taught me so much about its historical role in French food culture, and eating at French bakeries and restaurants contributed to this understanding by highlighting its contemporary standing in the gastronomic sphere.

Conclusion

This project has examined the manipulative practices of Louis XIV next to the concurrent development of modern pastry, as well as the sociological and technological themes underlying both, to assert the role of pastry as a distractionary technique employed by Louis XIV at the Court of Versailles. From an historical analysis of both the personage and the reign of Louis XIV comes confirmation of his intricately strategic ruling style, utilizing every available avenue to consolidate his power, including relocating his Court, imposing complex standards of etiquette, and employing lavishness and opulence as means of distraction. The following exploration of *l'art de pâtisserie* from its conception as shaped breads in ancient times through its development to the modern form shows the advancements in the gastronomical field, including availability and use of certain ingredients, the propagation of cookbooks, and an increasing emphasis on fine dining beyond just the highest nobility that occurred concurrently with the reign of Louis XIV. The simultaneous evolution of pastry with Louis XIV's manipulation of his court made the former a perfect mechanism for achieving the latter.

This position is strengthened through an analysis of the prevalent connection between the consumption of fine foods and assertions of power, wealth, and status. This relationship is explored in terms of both quality and quantity of food, and also as the increasing availability of fine food through the introduction of restaurants changed the implications of consuming it. An analysis of the ingredients of pastry, specifically the expense and rarity of sugar, firmly place the art form in the realm of fine food, and as such make it less attainable to those outside the highest classes. Because of this novelty and exclusivity, pastry connotes the same language as other elements of luxury employed by Louis XIV.

A final analysis achieved through firsthand experience confirms these findings and explores the colloquial modern conception of pastry, as compared to the historical view of previous chapters. Detailing a visit to Versailles situates this project's research in the place where the reality occurred, and also lends the use of art and architecture to further support assertions of opulence as communicative of Louis XIV's absolutist power.

To even the most unfamiliar observer, both *pâtisserie* and Louis XIV are quintessential tenants of 'Frenchness' as it is stereotyped globally. This project began as an attempt to characterize the *je ne sais quoi* inherent in French food culture, and through research was narrowed chronologically to the era of Versailles and by content to the realm of pastry. A study of each, through historical and contemporary sources, has yielded initially surprising connections between the two that, upon further exploration, can be explained through the broader societal theme of fine food consumption as assertive of power. This analysis takes a targeted perspective on the luxury and excess of life at Versailles, including the gluttony of consumption by Louis XIV as well as his more strategic actions, to assert new findings surrounding the employment of pastry as a novelty and a rarity, and therefore another expensive, opulent, and covert tool with which the Sun King further entrenched his nobility in their regal-centric revolutions.

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The interdisciplinary curriculum of Plan II allowed Averie to continue her study of the French language and to learn more about European history. This thesis project was born from these academic experiences, combined with a lifelong love of baking by a longtime Francophile.

Averie will graduate in May 2018 and plans to begin her career in food marketing with Frito-Lay in the fall.

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